

The Four Anchor-points for Prayer

Prayer is at its best when there is some shape and some flexibility. In this regard, the following four anchor points provide some structure in which Spirit of God can operate freely.

1. Preparation

How am I as I prepare for prayer? What sort of mood am I in?
Therefore...

What do I want to ask the Lord for?

Peace? Generosity? Openness? Trust/Forgiveness? Or what else...?

What piece of scripture, text, hymn, poem, etc, shall I use?

If necessary, e.g. with a Gospel scene, read the text slowly several times beforehand so that you are familiar enough with the narrative.

How long I am going to pray for? Be realistic. Where shall I choose to pray? How might I prepare the place? How might I avoid disruptions?
e.g. put my your mobile phone on silent.

2. Entry into Prayer

- Go to your place of prayer.
- Make yourself comfortable and become still – perhaps using an awareness or stillness exercise.
- Act of the Presence of God (see previous section).
- Make a very slow sign of the Cross (or some other prayerful gesture) – either externally or mentally – and slowly ask the Holy Spirit to help you pray.

... Time of Prayer ...

3. Bringing Prayer to a Close

- Quietly bring your prayer together and in the light of this, speak with God as one friend to another. Have a heart to heart chat with God.
- Pray a slow Our Father, Glory Be, or another prayer.
- You could make a slow sign of the Cross – externally or mentally – or some other prayerful gesture.
- Slowly leave the place where you have been praying, with gratitude for the time God has been with you.

4. Review of Prayer

Reviewing prayer allows reflection upon a prayer experience that is not helpful during prayer itself. It is also an aid to discernment of where and how God is at work, helping us to cooperate with what God is doing. The review can also be part of the preparation for further prayer, deciding whether to return to something ‘unfinished’, to savour longer or to move on to new material for prayer. If possible, do this in a different place from where you have been praying. Slowly recall the prayer period – rather like a video replay of the highlights. The following questions are helps. Do not try to use them all. Find the ones that work for you:

- Was it good to be to be at prayer, or not? Why?
- What did you do at the beginning of prayer?
- Did any major idea or ideas occur to you?
- Did you have any strong feeling or emotion? Peaceful, creative, loving – or disturbing, unsettling, confusing, fearful?
- Did you feel God’s love, or were you resistant towards God?

- Did you learn something during prayer? How does that change how you act?
- Did the Lord ask something of you?
- Did you find any unwillingness in yourself in face of what the Lord seemed to want of you?
- Note particularly the movements that were strong: high and low points.
- Is there something that feels unfinished, that you are drawn to return to in the next prayer time?

You may find it helpful to jot down your answers!

